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RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA PRIORITY 3510
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
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SUBJECT: NEPAL: MADHESI CONCERNS ARE PRIORITY IN CENTRAL
AND EASTERN TERAI

Classified By: A/DCM Robert Hugins. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

Summary

1. (C) Political leaders and government officials in the capitals of three Central and Eastern Terai districts -- Janakpur, Siraha, and Biratnagar -- expressed concern to Emboff during a May 16-18 visit that political turmoil in the troubled Southern borderland with India would increase dramatically if the Government of Nepal did not address Madhesi concerns immediately. Local residents believed that failure by the leaders of the eight parties to address Madhesi demands before setting an election date would likely result in a second "People's Movement" in the Terai. Janakpur and Siraha residents also opined that government efforts to satisfy Madhesis might reduce the growing influence and violence of the Maoist splinter group, Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha ("The People's Terai Liberation Front" or JTMM). Biratnagar residents expressed concern that government officials had yet to publicly condemn the recent upsurge of Young Communist League activities. Police officials in Janakpur, Siraha, and Biratnagar voiced regret that the Home Ministry had not provided them with a clear mandate to respond to the attacks. Residents in all three districts agreed that the poor security situation had to be addressed if the GON intended to hold a free and fair election in 2007.

Madhesi Concerns Transcend Party Lines

2. (C) The most consistent message during Emboff's May 16-18 meetings in the capitals of three Central and Eastern Terai districts was that the Government of Nepal (GON) should address Madhesi concerns as soon as possible. Political leaders from across the political spectrum in Janakpur (Danusa district), Siraha (Siraha district), and Biratnagar (Morang district) agreed that the demands put forth by the Madhesi Janadhikhar ("People's Rights") Forum or MPRF were valid as the Terai people had been underrepresented in Nepal's politics for decades. Local politicians and government officials identified the Madhesi movement as the "second phase" of the April 2006 People's Movement, asserting that failure on the government's part to address this

movement could result in a revolution -- or, worse -- the outbreak of a civil war in the Terai. While political leaders were glad that Prime Minister Koirala had recently reaffirmed that he would invite the MPRF into a discussion, most felt that the central leadership would not take the steps necessary to actually address Madhesi demands. Political leaders in Janakpur and Siraha said that the government should deal with the Madhesi issues before setting an election date, while leaders in Biratnagar believed that setting the date should come first. They unanimously agreed, however, that a Constituent Assembly election would only be possible if the government met the demands of the MPRF as soon as possible.

MPRF Demands Representation, Autonomy, and Inquiry

13. (C) Members of the Madhesi People's Rights Forum detailed to Emboff the list of demands presented to the eight-party leadership. It included a proportional representation system for the election and a federal system of governance, with a separate autonomous state for the Terai (reftel). In addition, the MPRF had insisted that the GON set up a Commission of Inquiry into security incidents in the Terai in recent months. The MPRF requested international support for a renewed census which would guarantee proportionate voter representation of the Terai population in the election, voicing concern to Emboff that the current delineation of constituencies allotted only five seats for the Danusa district of 462,000 voters, for example. Members of the Forum described the current proposal to allot 27 additional Parliamentary seats to the Terai districts as a "Band-Aid" for the problem of disproportionate representation. MPRF members claimed they were poised to launch a revolution if

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the GON did not meet their demands.

JTMM, YCL Attacks on the Rise

14. (C) Political party leaders and members of the police forces in Janakpur and Siraha noted the recent increase in attacks by the Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha (JTMM) in Danusa and Siraha districts. The Chief District Officer in Janakpur opined that JTMM's goal was to threaten and ultimately "drive out" the Pahadi (hill persons) communities. The rise in JTMM attacks had been fueled by the GON's inability to address Madhesi concerns, according to most political leaders. JTMM attacks were not as prevalent in Biratnagar, in Morang district. Respondents there were more concerned about the increase in Young Communist League (YCL) interference. According to student leaders there, the YCL was inciting the public to protest against small social grievances. For example, the YCL had recently kidnapped the Indian driver whom the employer had hired as a replacement for a Nepali driver to "set an example" so the drivers association would tow their line. The students also asserted that YCL cadres were cooperating with the Farmers Association and the Maoist All Nepal National Free Students Union ("Revolutionary") (ANNFSU). According to the student leaders, the YCL had taken on a "Mafia"-like character and had been intimidating and kidnapping citizens to collect money for the Maoist election campaign. Most victims had been released for a fee.

Home Ministry Must Take Tougher Stand

15. (C) Chief District Officers and members of the police forces in Janakpur, Siraha, and Biratnagar, expressed concern that the eight parties had not publicly condemned the criminal activities of the JTMM and the YCL. Residents were frustrated that the GON had not labeled these groups terrorist organizations. Instead, the JTMM and the YCL had

been given free reign to commit abuses. The Home Ministry had not provided law enforcement officials with a clear mandate to crack down. Police officials agreed that, without clear guidance, their hands were tied. In Biratnagar, most politicians asserted that the YCL was directly controlled by the central Maoist leadership. Political leaders and security personnel in Janakpur, Siraha, and Biratnagar all agreed that holding an election in the current condition would be difficult, if not impossible. They all agreed that the GON should empower security personnel by providing more resources to police posts in the countryside and by publicly presenting a stronger front against JTMM and YCL activities.

Comment

¶6. (C) The Madhesi movement is viewed in Janakpur, Siraha, and Biratnagar in Central and Eastern Terai as an outgrowth of the long-standing disenfranchisement of the entire Terai region in Nepal's politics. Political parties across the spectrum fully support the Madhesi cause. There is also an overwhelming sense that an election will not be possible if the GON does not adequately address the Terai's demands. Continued political upheaval in this region -- which is home to nearly 40 percent of Nepal's residents and much of its industrial base-- would seriously destabilize the election process and could fuel increased support for non-state actors such as the Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha and the Young Communist League. We will continue to urge the Government of Nepal to address Madhesi concerns in a transparent and inclusive manner, to stand up to continued JTMM and YCL abuses, and to increase the capacity for local security forces to enforce law and order.

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